

Madame Speaker,

I rise today to speak for those oppressed in Cuba that cannot speak for themselves. As the Administration is moving forward with immigration talks, as the Organization of American States is welcoming Cuba, I rise to remind my colleagues in Washington, and my friends abroad that when you deal with Cuba, you are not dealing with a benign regime, you are dealing with a dangerous regime. The regime's most recent crackdown has surfaced in the oppression of religion.

In May 2008, Pastor Omar Gude Perez was arrested and charged with human trafficking. When no evidence was found to support the charges, the Cuban regime simply changed the charges. He is now on trial for "counter-revolutionary conduct." A man, who has been dedicated to his religion for twenty years, now faces years in prison for crimes he never committed.

Last week, 30 evangelical, non-political, pastors were arrested by Cuban authorities. This is a clear attack on religion by the Castro Regime.

On top of these atrocities, we hear that two Castro spies may have been working among us in our government for decades! It is crucial that the United States government move slowly and cautiously in our relationship with Cuba.

In light of this, the Administration must not make any further decisions regarding Cuba until a comprehensive damage assessment is completed and Congress is fully briefed.